

# memorandum

DATE: June 14, 1988

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: Migratory Bird Field Coordinator, Memphis, TN

SUBJECT: Trip Report - White River NWR, May 31, 1988

TO: John Oberheu, Refuge Supervisor RF-1, Refuges & Wildlife, FWS,  
Atlanta, GA

The attached trip report is for your review and consideration.

/s/ Donald H. Orr  
*Dy: Orr*

cc: Frank Bowers  
White River NWR

"Make Safety A Friend For Life"

## REFUGE TRIP REPORT

Migratory Bird Field Coordinator, Memphis, TN

Refuge: White River

Dates: May 31, 1988

Reason:

Asses the potential of increasing the quantity and quality of waterfowl wintering habitat.

Accomplishments:

Manager Hurdle, Researchers Reinecke and Shaffer and I made an on-site visit to the demonstration and farm unit areas to discuss habitat management alternatives aimed at improving wintering habitat. We discussed past management activities associated with planted and moist soil crops. There have been some concerns expressed by the public that we are not growing as much food in the demonstration area as in the past; which has resulted in fewer birds using the area. The demonstration area is marginal farm land and well suited to moist soil; but crops such as milo and millet can be successfully grown. Whether moist soil or small grains are grown, the productivity can be greatly increased by further developing the irrigation system. To do this would require a pump to bring water from the storage reservoirs into the highest elevations of the demonstration unit. By constructing low rice-type levees the water levels can be managed in each sub-unit to assist in seed germination, productivity and weed control. In my opinion, I believe we should lean heavily toward planted crops; since the forest and openings created through the forest management program should provide an abundant supply of native plant foods. Some subunits in the demonstration area should also be managed for moist soil plants.

The farm unit is managed primarily for geese and the present program should be adequate for this species. As we discussed, it would be desirable to impound water during the winter in the cooperators rice fields. It might also be desirable to attempt to grow a second rice crop by flooding immediately after harvest to germinate unharvested seeds and to then make this available by flooding in the winter. This should make the farm unit more attractive to ducks.

Creating more diversity in the refuge forest habitat would also be desirable. Locating and developing more units like the demonstration unit should be investigated. Such units should be distributed throughout the length of the refuge to achieve a good distribution of birds. The present forest management plan should be amended to include developing small clear-cut areas throughout the forested habitat. This activity was proposed for present plan but deleted by Regional Office. Such openings should be maintained and managed to produce moist soil type plants and some could possibly be planted to milo and millet.

### Summary:

Implementing the above recommended activities will require additional funding for construction and management. A portable pump should be purchased as soon as possible in order to achieve water management capability on those units that have already been developed. This should be the first high priority activity achieved with additional funding.

### Recommendations:

1. Continue to manage demonstration unit for planted and moist soil crops.
2. Improve irrigation capability in demonstration unit by pumping and managing water through a low (rice-type) levee system. (High Priority)
3. Close rice levees on farm unit to flood unit making more food resources available to waterfowl. (High Priority)
4. Develop additional areas like the demonstration unit well distributed throughout the forested habitat. (High Priority)
5. Implement a small clear-cut type forest openings program. (High Priority)

### Personnel Present:

Marvin Hurdle, Ken Litzenberger, James Harris, Ken Reinecke, Charles Shaffer and Don Orr